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A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF Media Representation AMERICA -IRAN WAR FOR MEDIA DISCOURSE IN SOME SELECTED CHANNELS

A B S T R A C T

One form of discourse is media discourse, which covers channel reports and different types of news. War news is a prominent focus of many media reports, and each channel reflects particular ideological positions. This study conducts a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of media coverage of the American–Israeli–Iran conflict across four international news channels: CNN (North America), DW News (Europe), Al Jazeera, and CGTN (Asia). The primary objective is to uncover hidden ideologies and discursive preconceptions in these reports. The study tries to focus on the news coverage of the America–Israel–Iran war varies across major international outlets in ways that may systematically influence audience attitudes, yet there is limited comparative analysis detailing how language choices, casualty reporting specificity, and strategic-rationale framing differ across these channels. This study addresses the gap by identify the following points: To determine the extent to which each outlet's ideological orientation predicts consistent patterns of representation, to identify and compare framing strategies used by CNN, DW, Al Jazeera, and CGTN in reporting and to contribute empirically grounded insights into how international news coverage can influence public perception and moral evaluations during interstate conflict. The study employs an eclectic model based on Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (1998, 2000). The analysis has two levels: (1) application of the Ideological Square to examine strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, and (2) analysis of specific discursive strategies such as the number game, actor description, and victimization. By comparing reports from different continents, the study demonstrates how media discourse shapes reality through polarization (Us vs. Them). Conclusions show that geographical and political affiliations influence patterning and the construction of ideological dominance.

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تحليل نقدي للخطاب حول الحرب الأمريكية - الإيرانية في التغطية الإعلامية لبعض القنوات المختارة

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الملخص

يُعدّ خطاب الوسائط الإعلامية أحد أبرز أشكال الخطاب، إذ يشمل تقارير القنوات الإخبارية ومختلف أنواع الأخبار. وتُشكل أخبار الحروب محوراً رئيساً في العديد من التغطيات الإعلامية، حيث تعكس كل قناة مواقف أيديولوجية محددة. تتناول هذه الدراسة تحليل الخطاب النقدي لتغطية وسائل الإعلام للصراع الأمريكي-الإسرائيلي-الإيراني عبر أربع قنوات إخبارية دولية هي CNN : من أمريكا الشمالية، و DW News من أوروبا، و Al Jazeera ، و CGTN من آسيا. ويتمثل الهدف الرئيس للدراسة في الكشف عن الأيديولوجيات الخفية والافتراضات الخطابية الكامنة في هذه التقارير الإعلامية.

تركز الدراسة على كيفية تباين تغطية أخبار الحرب الأمريكية - الإسرائيلية - الإيرانية عبر المنافذ الإعلامية الدولية الكبرى بطرق قد تؤثر بصورة منهجية في مواقف الجمهور. وعلى الرغم من ذلك، ما يزال التحليل المقارن الذي يوضح اختلاف اختيارات اللغة، ودقة تقارير الضحايا، وتأطير المبررات الاستراتيجية عبر هذه القنوات محدوداً. وتسعى الدراسة إلى معالجة هذه الفجوة من خلال تحقيق الأهداف الآتية: تحديد مدى تنبؤ التوجه الأيديولوجي لكل وسيلة إعلامية بأنماط تمثيل متسقة، والتعرف على استراتيجيات التأطير والمقارنة التي تستخدمها CNN و DW News و Al Jazeera و CGTN في تغطيتها الإخبارية، فضلاً عن الإسهام في تقديم رؤى قائمة على البيانات حول كيفية تأثير التغطية الإخبارية الدولية في الإدراك العام والتقييمات الأخلاقية أثناء الصراعات بين الدول.

تعتمد الدراسة نموذجاً انتقائياً قائماً على المقاربة الاجتماعية-المعرفية لـ (Teun A. van Dijk، 1998، 2000).

ويُجرى التحليل على مستويين: أولاً، تطبيق المربع الأيديولوجي لفحص استراتيجيات العرض الإيجابي للذات والعرض السلبي للآخر؛ وثانياً، تحليل مجموعة من الاستراتيجيات الخطابية، مثل لعبة الأرقام، ووصف الفاعل، والتضخيم بمكانة الضحية. ومن خلال المقارنة بين تقارير إعلامية صادرة من قارات مختلفة، تكشف الدراسة عن الكيفية التي يُشكل بها خطاب الوسائط الإعلامية الواقع من خلال ثنائية الاستقطاب (نحن مقابل هم). وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الانتماءات الجغرافية والسياسية تؤثر بصورة مباشرة في أنماط التمثيل الإعلامي وبناء الهيمنة الأيديولوجية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: خطاب الإعلام ، حرب أمريكا-إسرائيل-إيران ، الأيديولوجيا ، التمثيل الإعلامي.

Introduction

In the contemporary era of globalized information, international media outlets can operate as ideological devices rather than neutral observers. The geopolitical conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran illustrates how discourse can manufacture consent and marginalize opposing narratives. This study examines ideological mechanisms used by CNN, DW News, Al Jazeera, and CGTN to frame the conflict, offering a cross-continental perspective on media representation. The theoretical framework is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (1998). The study

uses the Ideological Square to reveal discursive polarization—emphasizing positive actions of the in-group and negative actions of the out-group while de-emphasizing in-group negatives and out-group positives—and applies van Dijk’s discursive strategies (2000) to show how ideology is constructed linguistically.

The Power of Media Discourse

Scholars across linguistics, politics, discourse studies, and sociology study media representation. O’Keeffe (2011) defines media discourse as “the interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer” (p. 441). Analyzing news requires examining context, participants, audience, and language. Kress (1990) describes ideological discursive structures; van Dijk (1991) investigates news roles in cultural relations, racism, and power abuse; and Fairclough (1995) argues that media discourse helps reproduce social relations and domination. Tuchman (1978, as cited in Fairclough, 1995) notes journalists’ reliance on legitimized sources to substantiate facts. Van Dijk (1988) presents a structured process for interpreting news to determine sources of dominance, power, and inequality in social and historical contexts.

The Concept of Ideology

The term ideology entered usage in the late 18th century to describe sets of ideas and beliefs (van Dijk, 2005). Simpson (1993) defines ideology as value structures and beliefs held by social groups that appear in texts through linguistic practices. Van Dijk (1995) views ideology as socio-cultural values (e.g., equality, fairness). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) see ideology as portrayals that reproduce unequal power relationships. Taiwo (2007) describes ideology as attitudes and opinions that influence group perception. Johnstone (2017) calls ideology a system of beliefs. Some scholars argue ideologies stem from linguistic norms rather than only from the intentions of ideologists (Gerring, 1997). Van Dijk (2006) proposes a socio-cognitive paradigm integrating social and cognitive functions of ideology, noting that ideologies legitimize domination and resistance. Al-Magsusi indicated (2025) that “ideologies can be changed, expressed, reproduced and acquired in the society”.

Methodology

This study aims to uncover hidden ideologies in channel coverage of the American–Israeli–Iran conflict. It adopts an eclectic model with two components: (1) the Ideological Square (van Dijk, 1998) focusing on positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, and (2) van Dijk’s (2000) discursive strategies (e.g., number game, actor description, victimization). Data were collected from four channels representing different continents: CNN (North America), DW News (Europe), Al Jazeera (Asia/Middle East), and CGTN (Asia). Two reports from each channel were selected and analyzed first with the Ideological Square and then with discursive strategies to reveal how media discourse reproduces ideology. By selecting diverse channels from America, Europe, and Asia, this research aims to highlight the variations in “perspectives” and “hidden agendas” that govern the reporting of the American-Israeli-Iranian war, ultimately revealing how media discourse

functions as a tool for ideological reproduction. This study chooses these channels in order to clarify and indicate their coverage for the war from different perspective. The study selects the reports of these channels and analyzes them firstly according Van Dijk's model (1998) of ideological square in order to uncover the hidden ideologies and secondly Van Dijk's discursive strategies (2000) which frames how these reports of media discourse reflecting and shaping the ideologies in the reports. Van Dijk (1998) states that discourse polarization reflects the conflicting between two categories in-group and out-group. These categories are stated in pronoun pair us and them (Van Dijk, 2000, 2006). Within these categories, ideologies are hidden and are often embodied discourse strategies. Van Dijk (1998, p. 44) offers a four-dimensional square, known as "Ideological square", having four strategies as Positive self-presentation and Negative other presentation and suggests that this square can be applied to all levels of discourse structure, and in terms of content, to semantic and lexical analysis which are as follows Van Dijk (2000):

Emphasize Our good things and positive things about us.

Emphasize Their bad things and negative things about them.

The above two strategies express emphasizing the positive actions of what the media institution considers the in-group, and de-emphasizing its negative actions. De-emphasize Our bad things and negative things about us.

De-emphasize Their good things and positive things about them. It is fairly obvious that a speaker/writer will emphasize the negative aspects of "Them" and emphasize the positive aspects of "Us". (van Dijk, 2006: 734). Moreover, van Dijk (2000, 2006; Ajiboye, 2013) divides the ideological square into twenty-seven (27) to show different ways to be expressed in discourse. Furthermore, this study delves into specific discursive strategies (Van Dijk, 2000) to understand the "how" of ideological construction. These include the number game (using statistics to enhance objectivity), actor description (characterizing participants in the conflict), and victimization (shaping the perception of who the real victims are). number game (a semantic strategy where number and statistics are deployed to enhance credibility and objectivity in argumentation), actor description refers to the ways discourse actors are portrayed – individually, collectively, negatively, positively or neutrally; victimization (refers to the semantic strategy of systematically representing real victims in situation descriptions of events); metaphor (refers to framing complex political or social issues in comparative imagery

This study aims to uncover the hidden ideologies of the channels which cover the war of American-Israeli-Iranian war. This study adopts an eclectic model which consists of two parts: the first one which is related to the ideological square and focuses on the four strategies of Positive self-presentation and Negative other- presentation and the second one which consists of the five discursive strategies. The data for this study were from different continents of the global media world. They are taken from America continent "CNN", from Europe "the DW News", Asia "Aljazeera and the CGTN ones, two from each one.

Data analysis and Discussion

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the CNN report (1)

At least 50 people killed in Lebanon in past 24 hours, health ministry says

By Catherine Nicholls **in one of the worst times" for Lebanon, says**

Van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998)

Emphasize "Their" Bad Things (Out-group: US & Israel)

The report repeatedly links "Israel" to destructive verbs such as "Israeli attacks," "Israeli strikes." This repeating attributes directly the agency to Israel and blames them.

Emphasize "Our" Good Things (The In-group: Iran)

The report makes the spot-on vulnerable groups as in "125 children" in Lebanon and "200 children" in Iran and this is a strategy to humanize the victims of the "Other's" actions, eliciting global empathy.

De-emphasize "Our" Bad Things (The In-group: Iran)

When the report mentions US or Israeli deaths, the language changes its style, US deaths are introduced as "Service members" in the duty, which softens the image of attacks in comparison to the phrase "killed civilians."

Van Dijk's Discursive Strategies (2000)

1- Number Game

Since the use of precise numbers is a strategy to signal objectivity and perfect facts. The report has many statistical numbers about the people who are killed during the attacks of Israeli such as "at least 50 people in Lebanon" then "at least 1,900 people in Iran"

2- Actor Description

The report removes the agent (Israel), then the news removes the moral and legal responsibility from them. This serves to minimize the negative actions of the attacks of Israel. "At least 1,900 people have been killed in attacks on Iran since" "People have been killed since the current conflict"

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the CNN report (2)

Iran says it will rebuild after major bridge hit near Tehran

Roshni Majumdar | Alex Berry Editor

Van Dijk's Discursive Strategies (2000)

1- Number Game

Trump's use of the phrase "next two to three weeks" to give an impression of the control of the military troops and to indicate that the war has a schedule. The mentioning of the number of steel plant factories "two major Iranian steel plants" and the "oldest medical research institute" which are destroyed to show their precise military targets inside Iran.

2- Hyperbole

The announcements of president Trump and foreign Minister Araghchi across the platforms of X are exaggerated especially when Trump described the strikes as extremely hard. He maximizes the degree of hardness whereas Araghchi's saying describes the bridges to be built and be stronger than before.

3- Metaphor

Araghchi compares the physical collapse of the bridge with the "**moral collapse**" of the US. The message is "Our physical bridges may fall, but it is America's standing that is truly falling.

Van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998)

Emphasize "Our" Good Things (The In-group: Iran)

The report highlights Foreign Minister Araghchi's quotation "Every bridge and building will be built back stronger" and frames Iran's resolve. This quotation portrays the stableness and strength of in-group in its decisions. Again, by mentioning the "Pasteur Institute" and "the country's oldest medical research institute," the report emphasizes the scientific and historical value of Iran's contribution to science and humanity, framing the victims as sophisticated and vital.

Emphasize "Their" bad things (Out-group: US & Israel)

The out-group is directly labeled as being in "moral collapse" and "an enemy in disarray". The report repeatedly uses the phrase "civilian infrastructure" and mentions "steel plants" and "medical research" to indicate the US-Israeli actions as war crimes or attacks on innocent ones, rather than strategic military attacks. In other words, to targeting civilians, Trump shares a footage of a collapsing bridge portrays the out-group as boastful and hostile.

De-emphasize "Our" Bad Things (The In-group: Iran)

The report does not mention or refer to any of Iranian military casualties or failures in defense. It frames and refers to the phrase "rebuilding stronger," and glosses over the fact that a major bridge was successfully hit. The physical destruction is de-emphasized by shifting the focus to the "damage to America's standing," making the loss of a bridge seem small compared to the enemy's loss of reputation.

De-emphasize "Their" good things (Out-group: US & Israel)

The claims of America that they are "striking only military targets" is placed at the very end of the report. While Trump mentions "achieving military objectives," the report shows the bad image when referring the descriptions of hit hospitals and bridges, making the "military success" a humanitarian failure instead.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the DW News report (1)

Trump's address to the nation on Iran war repeats familiar talking points

By Adam Cancryn.

Van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998)

Emphasize "Their" Good Things (Out-group: US & Israel)

Trump justifies and describes the attacks as a moral necessity to prevent a nuclear weapon, indicating the US as the safer of world. Trump justified the reasons behind U.S. attack is to prevent nuclear proliferation. It is stated positively as an "investment" in the future. He renames the war as an "investment" in the future of American citizens, framing destruction as a positive long-term gain for the "In-group."

Emphasize "Our" Bad Things (The In-group: Iran)

The report highlights Iran's "half-century of violence" and use of "proxies," labeling the in-group as a chronic aggressor. Even when mentioning a "new group," Trump labels the previous leadership as "radical," trying to maintain the image of Iran as an inherently dangerous entity and focusing on "enriched uranium," the text emphasizes the out-group's potential for global catastrophe. This excerpt ported the bad deeds of the nation of Iran by referring to the Iran's history "of violence" and a nuclear threat. This justifies stripping it of its status as a sovereign state and redefining it as a target.

De-emphasize "Their" Bad Things (Out-group: US & Israel)

The report notes that Trump "declined to offer any new details on his exit strategy." By focusing on the "two to three weeks" timeline, the administration attempts to hide the lack of a specific "endgame." Using the phrase "strategic objectives nearing completion" de-emphasizes the reality of bombing a country "back to the stone age" and hitting "power plants."

De-emphasize "Our" Good Things (Iran/Out-group)

Trump offers "no new signs of optimism" regarding diplomatic progress, effectively referring that there is no potential Iranian willingness to negotiate or reach a peaceful resolution.

Van Dijk's Discursive Strategies (2000)

1- Number Game

The report uses numbers as a strategy of persuasion to convince the readers of the scale of the threat. The numerical phrase "Half a century" of violence is used to provide historical legitimacy justification for the attack. The reference of the time of the speech "20-minute address" and the "two to three weeks" timeline for the war's end suggests a sense of control and precise achievement.

2- Hyperbole

The phrase "victories like few people have ever seen before" uses the language of qualitative superiority without providing actual statistics and highlighting the amount of victory to the readers as an image of terror to the other side.

3- Victimization

Trump tries to depict that US will be a victim for the "nuclear weapon," and bombing Iran and its proxies because of their violence nearly a half-century.

4- Metaphor

The report compares the “investment” of the war for the Americans’ future to a trade to save the future of the Americans.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the DW News report (2)

Iran war: US, Israel hit major bridge, steel plants in Iran

Roshni Majumdar | Natalie Muller | Matt Ford | Elizabeth Schumacher | Dharvi Vaid with AFP, AP, DPA and Reuters

Published 04/02/2026Published April 2, 2026last

Van Dijk’s Ideological Square (1998)

Emphasize "Our" Good Things (The In-group: Iran)

The In-group is portrayed as being motivated by "serious concerns" for the life of civilians and "human rights," positioning them as the moral object against the "radical" actions of the government.

Emphasize "Their" Bad Things (Out-group: US & Israel)

The report explicitly uses the term "war crimes" multiple times. It states the military attacks not as strategic success, but as a violation of "international human rights law.". It is a hint of criminalization of actions. The report emphasizes and mentions the most negative possible outcomes such as the killing of "175 people" (mostly children) in an "elementary school" and strikes on "health facilities and homes." It highlights "bad" quotations to show a lack of morality, such as Trump saying he might strike "just for fun" and Hegseth dismissing "rules of engagement" as "stupid."

De-emphasize "Their" Good Things (Out-group: US & Israel)

While the report mentions that Hegseth’s quote "investigators" to look into the school bombing, this good act is minimized by the surrounding context of the 175 deaths. The phrase "achieving military objectives" which are mentioned in previous paragraphs is replaced later with the phrase "attacking civilian infrastructure," shifting the "positive" military justification and replacing it with a "negative" illegal one.

De-emphasize "Our" Good things (The In-group/Iran)

Focusing entirely on the civilian suffering (schools, water plants), the report de-emphasizes any military or political attacks from the Iranian side. The report focuses on the *conduct* of the war (strikes on schools) rather than the *cause* of the war, effectively neutralizing any negative attributes of the In-group (Iran) by keeping them in the role of the "harmed civilian."

Van Dijk’s Discursive Strategies (2000)

1- Number Game

The use of phrasal numbers “Dozens” and “Over 100 law experts” by the law experts are used to show that there is a legal opposition in America against the policy of Trump and the war of Iran. The financial cost of US taxpayers highlights the economic issues of the war.

2- Hyperbole

Hyperbole is used to emphasize the recklessness or of the situation. The report uses a hyperbolic expression of Trump's saying "Just for fun" to portray the amount of control and power.

3- Actor Description

The report states roles of the experts of law and "senior officials," giving to them an authority. However, the aggressive quotes of Trump and Hegseth frame them as the "violators."

4- Metaphor

The report frames the rules of engagement which are treated compared as having the feature "stupid" that prevent the military from acting freely.

5- Victimization

The report repeatedly mentions civil infrastructures such as "schools," "health facilities," "elementary school," and "water treatment plants." In order to pay attention to the civil services for the people which are not military sites, the report "victimizes" the Iranian population as helpless targets of an overwhelming power. By mentioning that a missile hit a school "by mistake," the text highlights the civilians who pay the price for military errors.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Aljazeera

Report (1)

Iran war updates: US, Israel step up strikes; Tehran pledges retaliation

Donald Trump blasts NATO as 'paper tiger' for not backing US on Iran

By Zaid Sabah and Zsombor Peter

Published On 2 Apr 2026 2 Apr 2026

Van Dijk's Discursive Strategies (2000)

1- Metaphor

The most explicit metaphorical phrase is the quoted threat to "bomb Iran back to the stone ages" which compares the future situation of modern Iran to an ancient, primitive state. The metaphor evokes imagery of cultural and infrastructural obliteration rather than a measured military action. Another figurative framing is describing attacks as "stepped up," which anthropomorphize military action as a deliberate increase in intensity.

Van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998)

Emphasize "Our" Good Things (The In-group: Iran)

The report highlights that the target was a medical research center. This emphasizes the In-group has a history, heritage, and Iran's military is described as fighting to avoid "humiliation" and "surrender." These words frame their actions as a matter of honor and national dignity rather than just political interest.

Emphasize "Their" Bad Things (The Out-group: US and Israel)

The report quotes Donald Trump's threat to bomb Iran back to "the stone ages." This emphasizes bad behavior of the Out-group leaders. By listing "medical research center," "bridge," and "steel plants," the text emphasizes that the Out-group is destroying the foundations of daily life and health for civilians. Since the targets are Targeting Non-Military Sites.

De-emphasize "Our" Bad Things (The In-group)

While the report mentions that Hezbollah "carried out several attacks," it does not list the number of Israeli victims or the nature of the damage caused. Any "bad" thing is blamed on the need to avoid "humiliation," making the ongoing conflict seem like a forced choice rather than a decision by the In-group leaders.

De-emphasize "Their" Good Things (Out-group: US & Israel)

The report does not mention why these targets were hit the civil targets such as the steel plants which were used for missile parts, by leaving out the military rationale, the Out-group's actions are stripped of any "good" or logical purpose, leaving only the image of "stone age" destruction.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Aljazeera

Report (2)

I don't know how we'll emerge from this': How much more can Israelis take?

Years of war have fundamentally changed Israel's politics, economy and society, analysts say.

By Simon Speakman Cordall

Published On 3 Apr 20263 Apr 2026.

Van Dijk's Discursive Strategies (2000)

1- Number Game

This report uses financial and statistical data such as "cost it 352 billion shekels (\$112bn) and roughly to an average cost of 300 million shekels (\$96m) per day." to emphasize the cost of war debt and to pay the attention of readers to the burden of war. It also indicates the degree of conflict concerning the phrase "78 percent of Jewish Israelis... supported continuing the war."

2- Actor Description

The report uses the ideological labels "ultranationalist Meir Kahane... hardline National Security Minister... ultra-Orthodox Finance Minister" to explain the beliefs of political figures. These descriptions (ultranationalist, hardline, ultra-Orthodox) frame the actors as being on the extreme of the political spectrum. This helps the readers to perceive the government not as an administration, but as an ideological unit. Whereas the Phrase: "regional nemesis Iran", describing Iran as a "nemesis" moves the actor description into the realm of mythological stories.

3- Hyperbole

The strategy of hyperbole is generally used to describe the weight of the situation and the nature of the circumstances. The phrase "shattering any semblance of normality" is a hyperbole phrase used to emphasize the total chaos and the complete breakdown of daily life. Framing the war as an "existential battle" to exaggerate the nature of the conflict in the region.

4- Metaphor

In political discourse, metaphors are used to portray the general atmosphere of the political environment. The use of the phrase "A sort of a pall has fallen over people" is used to suggest that the entire society is living in a state of mourning or a funeral-life, transforming and communicating a sense of depression and optimistic life. Also, the phrase "Politics on the edge" this metaphor portrays the political situation as a person standing on an edge, suggesting that the state is about to a fall or a total transformation into something unrecognizable.

5- Victimization

The report shows an image of victimization involving both the Israeli and the Palestinian population. The phrase "Israeli's public faces... retreat to the shelters... shattering normality." This frames the Israel civilians as victims of Iranian missiles, emphasizing their exhaustion and strain to gain empathy from the international community. The phrase "Israel faces... credible accusations of genocide... target of war crimes" the text quotes Aida Touma-Sliman and legal experts to frame Palestinians as the victims of the Israel "genocidal war."

Van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998)

Emphasize "Our" Good Things (The In-group: Iran)

The report emphasizes the strength of the government of Iran indicating that in spite four weeks of bombardon, the government is stable.

Emphasize "Their" Bad Things (The Out-group: Israeli)

The report uses the word "genocidal" many times to describe the wars in Gaza and Iran. It directly links leaders like Netanyahu and Ben-Gvir to "war crimes" and "death penalty laws," portraying them as extremists of war.

De-emphasize "Our" Bad Things (The In-group: Iran)

It frames the capabilities of Iran without mentioning the effects of these Iranian ballistic missiles and minimizing Iranian threats. It does not detail any "bad" actions or casualties caused by Iran or its allies, instead focusing on the "credible accusations" against Israel and it ignores Iranian actions.

De-emphasize "Their" Good Things (The Out-group: Israel)

The report immediately mentions Reuters information saying only "one-third" of missiles were hit. This effectively de-emphasizes any perceived military victory.

Critical Discourse Analysis of the CGTN Report (1)

Iran war enters dangerous new phase as US strikes civilian facilities, say analysts

Middle East22:25, 03-Apr-2026

Li Ruikang , Yao Yao

Van Dijk's Discursive Strategies (2000)

1- Number Game

CGTN uses numbers to emphasize the brutality and disproportionate operations of the military strikes of US. So, the numbers in the following line "More than 15,000 bombing raids... 1,900 people killed and 20,000 injured... more than 115,000 civilian facilities damaged." aims to explain to the reader the massive image about the destruction of the US-Israeli actions against the civilian society. Also, the phrases eight people were killed and 95 wounded in the strike on the bridge" Which indicates the human cost of a single infrastructure strike. And concerning more than 100 international law experts in the United States, including scholars from Harvard, Yale, Stanford and the University of California.

2- Actor Description

The report describes Trump as aggressive leader while Chinese sources as experts. The phrase "Trump claiming responsibility... posting footage... warning that 'much more' would follow, describing Trump not just as a leader, but as a proactive instigator who claims responsibility and uses social media to warn of more violence. On the other hand, the phrase "Wang Jin, director of the Center for Strategic Studies... Tang Zhichao, director... Du Wenlong, military expert." the Chinese director as the scholarly expert.

3- Hyperbole

Hyperbole is used to emphasize the primitive or uncontrollable nature of the American military operations. The phrase "bring them back to the Stone Ages" is a direct quotation from Trump's speech, leading the readers to characterize the barbaric US targets and policy. The word "uncontrollable" is a hyperbolic phrase which portrays which predicts that the escalation will be out of control in the coming days.

4- Metaphor

Metaphors are used to simplify the geopolitical power dynamics into physical sensations. In the phrase "intended to put the screws on Iran" the report portrays the US behavior as a form of physical coercion, rather than diplomatic pressure. In the phrase "poisoning the Middle East investment climate", describing economic damage as poisoning, the text suggests that US actions are creating huge damage which will be continued for a long period of time as result of the military actions which will affect everyone in the region, not just the combatants.

5- Victimization

This report heavily focuses on the victimization of the Iranian population and civil infrastructures. The phrase "attack on a girls' school in Minab that killed 175 people". The report focuses on the victimization of the students who killed in the strike of US and partiers the US military actions as war criminals. And listing the civil infrastructures as in the following phrase "strikes on schools, health facilities, and homes" indicates the illegal strikes on these sites which are supposed to be under international law.

Van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998)

Emphasize "Our" Good Things (The In-group: Iran)

The report includes the phrase "Iranian volunteers mourning" on the ruins of a residential building which emphasizes the victimization of the Iranian people.

Emphasize "Their" Bad Things (The Out-group: US and Israel)

The report explicitly links US-Israeli actions to "violations of international humanitarian law" and "war crimes, "when it frames specifically the killing of 175 girls at a school. The report highlights Trump's threat to bring Iran "back to the Stone Ages" and his comment about striking "just for fun.". In addition to the words like "'plume of black smoke," and "bombing raids" are used to emphasize the destruction caused by the Out-group.

De-emphasize "Our" Bad Things (The In-group: Iran)

When the IRGC strikes data centers in Dubai and Bahrain, the report names these strikes" counter-strikes ".The language of the report portrays the In-group's violence as a defensive necessity rather than an act of aggression. The report does not mention the number of victims concerning the loss of life in these attacks. Therefore, it explains them as a clever way to "poison the investment climate."

De-emphasize "Their" Good Things (The Out-group: US and Israel)

When Trump claims that there is a "progress in talks," the report immediately follows it with the word "however," where Iranian officials deny the claims. This makes the Out-group's diplomatic "good" seem like a lie. It mentions that despite the strikes, the US is at a "strategic disadvantage ".This de-emphasizes the Out-group's military power, portraying their hits on infrastructure as a sign of weakness. The Out-group's claim to be "defanging" Iran is countered by intelligence reports showing that most of Iran's missiles are still intact. This minimizes their perceived "good" or "successful" military performance.

Critical Discourse Analysis of the CGTN report (2)

Iran claims downing of 12 US aircraft as Trump extends deadline amid intensifying conflict

World12:27, 06-Apr-2026

Van Dijk's Discursive Strategies (2000)

1- Number Game

This strategy lists the types of air-crafts as in the following line "Iran claimed that it has shot down ١٢ US aircraft ...two C-130 ,one A-10 ,four Black Hawk"... to narrative and focus on the technological defeat for the US. And indicating to the readers the miliarial success of Iran and the economic failure of US. It provides the credibility of Iranian military claims .This numerical phrase" MC-130J aircraft - each costing over ١٠٠\$ million" focuses on the massive price of each aircraft and the financial catastrophe US operation against Iran.

2- Actor Description

Actors are described through their political roles to influence the reader's impression of their control. In the phrase "Trump ...threatened to attack... after signaled another delay to its ultimatum", the President Trump is depicted as a hesitant actor, while his saying suggests an image of a decisive commander.

3- Hyperbole

The strategy of hyperbole is used to portray the escalation size of the stakes of the conflict to a global level. So, the use of "devastating" is a hyperbolic word used to frame that the current diplomatic moment as the edge of a cliff for the entire world. Also, mentioning the "97th wave" is a quantitative hyperbole which suggests an endless Iranian military capacity and the failure of US.

4- Metaphor

Here the metaphor transforms complex geographical and political concepts into physical, easily understood images. The phrase "*leverage its control over the Strait of Hormuz... as a strategic tool*" This report compares the strait of Hormuz as an organ of body to portray its important geopolitical and economical location in the global region. The strait of Hormuz it controls on the movement of the vessels in the Arabian Gulf.

5- Victimization

This strategy highlights the suffering of specific groups to justify legal claims or moral condemnation. The report inserted the phrase "Nuclear Power Plant" of Iran to frame itself as a potential victim of nuclear terrorism. This is a victimization tactic aimed at rallying international support (Russia/India) by presenting the US as an "irresponsible" and "illegal" aggressor. The phrase "Israeli emergency services reported that a residential building ...was severely damaged ...injuring at least 10 people" The report also acknowledges the victimization of Israeli civilians. Highlighting "residential buildings" and "injuries" in Haifa frames the conflict as a human tragedy where innocent civilians are the primary targets of the missile strikes.

Van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998)

Emphasize "Our" Good Things (The In-group: Iran)

The report highlights Iran's military effectiveness by claiming the downing of "12 US aircraft" and the execution of the "97th wave" of operations. Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz is framed as a "strategic tool" used for a legitimate cause and seeking "compensation for war damages. "The report frames the diplomatic role of the Foreign Minister Araghchi which is shown in engaging with major world powers such a Russia and India, and appealing to the "UN Security Council" and "international law." This frames the In-group as the "rational" and "law-abiding" side of the conflict.

ts and portrays the In-group technologically capable in its control of the war. **Emphasize "Their" Bad Things (The Out-group: US & Israel)**

The text emphasizes the aggression and threats of Trump's "ultimatum-style rhetoric" and his threats to destroy "power plants and bridges.". This portrays the Out-group as an aggressor targeting the survival of civilians. The report focuses heavily on US military failures, describing the "heavy loss" of expensive equipment (MC-130J aircraft costing \$100m) and the "risks of sustained military operations" in hostile territory.

De-emphasize "Our" Bad Things (The In-group: Iran)

When Iran attacks targets in Kuwait or the UAE, the report uses terms like "True Promise" and "precise strikes." It frames these actions as strategic "counter-strikes" rather than acts of terrorism or regional destabilization. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which is a "vital global energy chokepoint," is justified by the In-group's need for "compensation," de-emphasizing the negative global economic impact caused by Iran's decision.

De-emphasize "Their" Good Things (The Out-group: US & Israel)

The report mentions that the US "has not confirmed" the loss of 12 aircraft, but then immediately cites *The New York Times* to confirm that at least some were lost. This makes US official statements appear untrustworthy or secretive. While Trump mentions "serious negotiations," the report frames his approach as an "ultimatum" that hinders mediation, suggesting that any "good" diplomatic effort by the US is actually a facade for more threats.

Conclusion

This cross-continental CDA shows consistent patterns in which each channel frames the conflict to reflect its ideological and geographical orientations. Van Dijk's Ideological Square and discursive strategies (number game, actor description, victimization, metaphor, hyperbole) appear repeatedly across reports, demonstrating that media are not neutral conveyors of facts but active agents in ideological construction, as is stated as follows:-

1- CNN:

Frequent precise casualty numbers (number game) to legitimize claims.

Actor descriptions often soften in-group casualties ("service members") and emphasize civilian victims in other countries.

Victimization of civilians used to elicit empathy; agency sometimes attributed clearly to Israel for strikes.

2- DW News:

Uses historical and numerical framings ("half-century of violence") to justify or challenge actions (number game).

Quotes and timelines (e.g., "two to three weeks") present control and authority; occasional de-emphasis of own failures.

Hyperbole and metaphors frame stakes and moral justification.

3- Al Jazeera:

Emphasizes civilian suffering and societal costs (victimization, number game).

Uses ideological labeling (e.g., "genocidal") and actor descriptors to frame actors as extremists. De-emphasizes negative actions of groups portrayed as victimized.

4- CGTN:

Large numerical claims and portrayals of Western aggression (number game).

Positions Chinese experts as credible analysts (actor description) while framing Western leaders as aggressive. Metaphors and victimization strengthen portrayal of in-group moral standing.

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